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ABSTRACT

Teachers' understandings and interpretations of their own development can be a positive influence on their further professional development. Research on teacher career development has revealed certain atypical stages of development experienced over a teacher's long-term career. Three developmental phases occur. The first phase lasts from about age 20 to 40, and involves considerable shifts in commitment to teaching, job morale, and other outlooks. In this period, teachers are in the process of establishing themselves in their careers, finding the optimal school environment, and becoming deeply involved with their families. From about age 40 to 55, teachers exhibit high morale and commitment to teaching. The final attitudinal phase is characterized by a combination of high job morale, an awareness of loss of energy and enthusiasm, and a drawing away from students and their parents. Suggestions are made for ways in which inservice teacher educators can help teachers review and understand their own long-term career development. (JD)

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HELPING TEACHERS EXAMINE THEIR LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT

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Helping Teachers Examine Their Long-Range Development

Not so long ago, a staff developer wanted to find out his colleagues' morale, commitment to teaching, and dedication to professional growth. He made the rounds, talking with teachers one by one. When he got to Mrs. Wise, however, she started telling the story of her whole teaching career--why she had gone into teaching, the struggles and joys of her early years, her decision to continue as a classroom teacher, her increasing command of the subject matter, her focus on the students, the advantages and disadvantages of the schools where she had taught, the changes of children's attitudes in school over the years, and her feelings of success. The staff developer tried as tactfully as he could to bring her to the current point in her career. "Young man," she declared, "How can I tell you where I am until I tell you where I've been!" And she proceeded to explain her present morale, commitment to teaching and dedication to professional growth. "Now I see," said the staff developer, and he left greatly enlightened.

We believe that there is enlightenment for teacher educators and for teachers themselves in teachers' reflections on their professional lives. We maintain that teachers' understandings and interpretations of their own development can be a positive influence on their further development. The purpose of this paper is three-fold: to argue for the importance of examining teachers' long-range professional experience; to review selected research on teacher career development; and to suggest ways in which inservice teacher educators can help teachers review their careers.

In recent years an increasing emphasis has been placed on inservice teacher education. There is a recognition that the experience of classroom teaching is powerful, compared to the effect of preservice teacher education. For teachers to grow in their effectiveness with young people, inservice education must provide more and better opportunities for professional development. Traditionally, such inservice programs attempt to inculcate knowledge and skills. The recipients of inservice education have not been viewed as developing individuals on their journeys to long-range personal and professional goals.

The mass media sometimes carry reports of teacher stress and burnout. Extended stays in the classroom have broken some teachers' determination, sapped their patience, distorted their regard for children, and even rendered them mentally unfit to continue teaching. What have these teachers experienced since first stepping behind the teacher's desk? The educational system cannot afford to have them take the road to discouragement.

It may seem at first glance that a teacher's past is not very important in understanding his or her present. After all, teaching is a "flat" occupation, i.e., there is no promotion within the occupation; "advancement" means leaving classroom teaching. Dreeban (1970) and Lortie (1975) have each noted that pay increments are small, regular, and unrelated to merit. Nor does greater experience lead to major changes in job conditions. Initially it appears that the annual cycle of the school year lulls teachers into a repetitious professional cycle of their own.

Long-term growth, development and change in teachers are of low visibility due to the nature of the occupation.

Research on Teacher Career Development

Research on long-term teaching experience conducted in the past fifteen years is slowly but surely bringing teacher development to the prominence it deserves. While intensity of change is generally recognized to occur in the preservice and induction phases of teaching, we are just beginning to document how change occurs throughout the career.

Looking at the preservice experiences, Fuller and Bown (1975) identified four stages in the process of becoming a teacher. In the first stage, "preteaching concerns," preservice teachers identify with pupils and are apt to be critical of teachers with whom they work; these education students see themselves as teachers only in fantasy. The second stage, "early concerns about survival," finds them worried about whether they can handle discipline, learn the content to be taught, and perform successfully in their evaluators' eyes. In the third stage, "teaching situation concerns," the emerging teachers think about the demands of teaching and continue to focus their mental energy on whether their own performance is adequate. In the fourth stage, "concerns about pupils," their attention shifts from self to the students' needs and learning. Fuller and Bown noted that these "stages" describe teachers' concerns, not what teachers are actually accomplishing. Whether the "stages" are distinct or overlapping has not been established.

Recent studies of the early inservice years support the notion that self and survival are still of central importance to new teachers. Nathalie J. Gehrke (1976) interviewed eleven beginning secondary teachers to determine

how they adapted the teacher role to meet their own needs while they were also being socialized to the role demanded by others. Gehrke suggested that the needs of teachers during role transition are for respect, liking, belonging, and competence. These basic needs in turn affected the teachers' perceptions of self, the role ideal, role-related problems, and other persons.

Ryan et al. (1980) conducted a field study of eighteen first year teachers. The purpose of this study was to describe new teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers and to explore changes in those perceptions. Through interviews, observations and casual conversations, data were gathered which revealed development throughout the year.

As the new teachers began the year they felt generally competent and confident. They had earned college degrees and teaching certificates; therefore, they felt prepared to teach. By the fourth to sixth week of the school year that confidence was somewhat diminished.

The first three months of the school year were described as a trial-and-error period. New teachers became aware of the responsibility of their positions. By Thanksgiving two of the teachers in the sample had resigned. Concerns of teachers centered upon organization, planning and instruction, relationships with students and other adults in the building, tolerance and patience in response to student misbehavior, and declining confidence in themselves as effective professionals.

Christmas vacation seemed to be a turning point in the school year. In January the teachers felt their confidence and competence begin to increase. The May evaluation conferences, in which contracts were awarded for the coming year, marked a second turning point. New contracts were interpreted

as official recognition of success. By the end of the year most of the new teachers saw themselves as seasoned professionals. While tired and in need of a break, most knew they would return to the classroom for a second year.

Most research on teacher career development has dealt with small segments of the teaching career, usually the preservice or early years. A few studies have looked at larger segments. In exploratory studies by Burden (1979), Newman (1978), and Peterson (1978), for example, experienced teachers were interviewed intensively about their careers.

Burden (1979) interviewed fifteen public elementary teachers, with four to twenty-eight years of teaching experience, to obtain their perceptions of how they had changed both personally and professionally since they had started to teach. Evidence emerged for three stages in the early part of a teaching career. The first stage occurred during the first year of teaching. The teachers reported their limited knowledge of teaching activities and environment; they were subject-centered and felt they had little professional insight; they lacked confidence and were unwilling to try new methods; they found themselves conforming to their preconceived image of "teacher." The second through fourth years constituted the second stage. The teachers noted that during this period they were learning a great deal about planning and organization, about children, curriculum and methods. They gradually gained confidence in themselves and began to discover that students are people. The third stage reported by Burden's teachers was comprised of the fifth and subsequent years of teaching. In this final stage teachers felt they had a good command of teaching activities and the environment. They were now child-centered, felt confident and secure, and were willing to try new teaching

methods. They found they had gradually abandoned their original image of "teacher" and had gained professional insight.

Newman (1978) interviewed ten public school teachers with experience ranging from nineteen to thirty-one years. Tentative stages of a teaching career emerged. The first few years were times of frequent switches in schools, levels and subjects taught; teachers seemed to be searching for the teaching situations in which they felt most comfortable. Interestingly, they did not recall their first year as particularly notable. Still in their twenties, the teachers attended graduate school and/or took breaks from teaching in order to raise families. They achieved professional maturity and were highly satisfied. At about age thirty they faced and made the decision to continue on for a classroom teaching career.

In their second decade of teaching, these teachers tended to remain in one teaching position. Their satisfaction fluctuated, and several teachers felt progressively more dissatisfied. Close to age forty, some changed grade levels or subjects to recharge their flagging vitality.

In their forties and early fifties, the teachers in Newman's study experienced moderate dissatisfaction, although they did not regret having chosen a teaching career. The teachers realized that over the years they had become more informal and more flexible in their dealings with students. They now felt less energetic. They faced retirement with ambivalence. These teachers had experienced similar changes in work histories, satisfactions, and professional efforts throughout their careers.

Peterson (1978) conducted an exploratory interview study of fifty retired secondary school teachers in an effort to acquire further information about

how teachers' attitudes and outlooks change throughout the teaching career. From the personal changes the teachers recalled and described, Peterson said the teaching career could be divided into three attitudinal phases.

The first phase lasts about from age twenty to forty and involves considerable shifts in commitment to teaching, job morale, and other outlooks. Teachers are in the process of establishing themselves in their careers, finding the optional school environment, and are also deeply involved in their families. This period of "ups" and "downs" for teachers appears to end when they manage to find a school which offers them the opportunity to put down roots and begin a phase of professional commitment and growth.

The second phase of teaching appears to last about from age forty to fifty-five. Teachers in this phase exhibit high morale and commitment to teaching. They are at the professional peak of their career during this time.

The final attitudinal phase is marked by a withdrawal from the teaching profession and is characterized by a variety of different attitudes and outlooks. This phase lasts from age fifty-five until retirement. During this time, teachers are able to maintain high job morale but are aware of the effects of biological aging. Energy and enthusiasm fade.

The teachers in Peterson's study also indicated that they perceived different groups within the school in different ways during their career development. As they gained in age and experience, teachers grew closer to same aged colleagues, but further from their students and students' parents. Historical events surrounding the school also affected the perceptions of teachers across time.

Facilitating Reflection on Development

It is likely that most teachers have never reflected upon their long-range development. Many of the teachers who were interviewed in the studies described above spoke of the insight they had gained through the interviews. This insight ought to be facilitated through inservice education. Programs can be designed to help teachers understand and interpret their own development, anticipate future developmental stages, and promote their own growth. In this section several strategies are suggested for helping teachers examine their long-range development. These ideas may be implemented in single inservice sessions or combined for multiple sessions.

A. Examining teachers' own careers

1. Have teachers draw a horizontal line across the blank page. This represents the time line of their teaching careers. Say, "Careers may be marked by different stages, experiences, changes. If you were to divide your teaching career into several parts, what would mark your divisions? Mark them on the line. Jot down the special characteristics of each part."
2. Have teachers chart their development in key aspects of teaching in areas such as teaching effectiveness, rapport with students, and satisfaction with teaching. Other possibilities are class management ability, commitment to teaching, and feelings of success. On the horizontal axis are the years of teaching; on the vertical axis are the categories "high," "medium," and "low."
3. Take the teachers on a guided fantasy; "Close your eyes, and see yourself in your first year of teaching, on the first day of class. You're walking into the classroom. Look around; listen. Be aware

of your feelings. Now see yourself one day near the end of your first year; what are you doing; what are you thinking? Now come into the present, and see yourself this morning at 10:00. Where are you; what claims your attention? Now jump to ten years from now. Are you still teaching? See yourself in your classroom." This is a brief outline of a guided fantasy; it may be filled in with a variety of details with the provision that the past, present and future always be included.

4. Have teachers make two columns on a paper. In the first column they describe what they were like as first year teachers. In the second column they list characteristics of themselves as teachers currently. Center a discussion around the questions: How did you get from those characteristics to these? Did you go through stages? What were the turning points?
5. Have the teachers write professional autobiographies. Insights gained through writing often have a different quality from insights through discussion.
6. Have teachers recall their own teachers. At what stages were the teachers who seemed most effective? What special qualities marked effectiveness? How are those qualities played out in the teaching careers of these former students?
7. Have teachers record activities they have participated in over the last year which seemed to contribute to their professional growth. Is there a pattern which might illustrate a stage in development? What kinds of formal or informal structures influence professional growth?

B. Viewing others teachers' careers

1. Have teachers befriend a new teacher. Have them hold regular, friendly conversations, and note what concerns the new professional has. How does he/she cope with the newness of the career? What kind of support seems most helpful?
2. Read accounts of new teachers such as Biting the Apple (Ryan et al., 1980). What changes are most obvious during a professional's first year? What themes are recurring? Will they recur throughout a teacher's career?
3. Have teachers interview a teacher who taught for many years. Ask about what teaching has been like, how that teacher has changed, and how times have changed.
4. Read books written by teachers about their teaching, for example, Nathan's Tales of a Teacher (1956) or Rousculp's Chalk Dust On My Shoulder (1969). Have teachers compare the author's career development to their own.
5. Watch films of teachers such as "Up the Down Staircase," "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie," or "The Corn is Green." What events mark these teachers' careers? How realistic are they?
6. Examine pictures of teachers. What can you tell about career development from such observations? What inferences do we make based upon a teacher's dress, posture, age, sex, environment?
7. Observe a heterogeneous group of teachers at an inservice workshop. What can you tell about stages of professional development from the actions of the people in the group? From the questions people ask? From the attitudes that are displayed?

C. Comparing personal and professional development

1. Read Levinson's et al.'s Seasons of a Man's Life (1978) or Gould's Transformations (1978). Talk about the stages of adult life. Do the teachers recognize these stages in their own lives?
2. Have teachers parallel their personal and professional development. At what point in personal development was professional development begun? How did personal growth affect professional growth? How did professional growth affect personal growth?
3. Have teachers explore ways they can help one another during different stages of development. What kind of support can be helpful to a first year teacher? A fifth year teacher? A fifteenth year teacher? How do teachers' interests in staff development or inservice activities change as they progress through the stages in their life careers?
4. Some teachers are self-renewing; others need help. Still others give up. Discuss what marks the differences in these teachers. Does renewal depend upon the teacher's present stage of development?
5. Have teachers consider teaching as a process of life-long learning. At this point in your own development, what do you still want to learn?

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